

The Identification of the Church of “Profitis Elias” in Thessaloniki

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One of the most important examples of Palaeologan architecture is the church now known as Profitis Elias (Prophet Elijah) in Thessaloniki, which stands on an imposing site a short distance above the basilica of St. Demetrios (Figs. 1–3). Impressive in size, the church is one of the most composite creations of Byzantine architecture, combining a spacious triconch, topped by a dome with a diameter of 5.5 m, with four domed subsidiary chambers, a large narthex (or *litē*) with a gallery above, and a western portico. The complex plan, lavish brick construction, and attenuated forms of the domes clearly indicate a Palaeologan date for the building.

Although “Profitis Elias” has frequently been mentioned in the scholarly literature, it has successfully hidden its many secrets. That virtually nothing is known about the early history of the church has discouraged almost all serious discussion—an odd situation for one of the most admirable surviving Byzantine buildings. Scholarly interest in the structure began with Texier and Pullan, who noted in 1864 that the building was formerly a Byzantine church that had been converted to a mosque.¹ They suggested that the mosque’s name, Sarayli Camii, was a corrupted form of the Byzantine dedication, which sounded to them like “Saint-Elie.” A virtual legend grew up around this speculation, and eventually resulted in the building’s being dedicated to the Prophet Elijah at the time of its reconversion to a church.

In fact, Sarayli Camii means “Palace Mosque.” More recently, this appellation led G. Theochar-

ides to identify the church with the katholikon of Nea Moni founded by Makarios Choumnos.² Theocharides proposed that the Ottoman name of the church recalled the existence of a former Byzantine palace in the vicinity. This agreed with the historical source for Nea Moni, which states that Choumnos “had selected the best location in the city, where once a palace had stood, and gave it over to his followers to clean, so that he could found a monastery there.”³

Curiously, in an earlier work Theocharides had attempted to place Nea Moni in the *Galerian* palace complex, that is, in the southeast area of the city, where the ruins of the extensive, late Roman imperial residence still survive.⁴ He proposed that the post-Byzantine church of the Panagouda had replaced the older building, as is entirely possible. In supporting this hypothesis, Theocharides obviously attached importance to the ideas of V. Laurent, who proposed to locate the monastery between the Arch of Galerius, the church of H. Sophia, and the Hippodrome.⁵

In spite of the contradictions, neither of the two theories of Theocharides has ever been seriously

²G. Theocharides, Δύο νέα έγγραφα ἀφορῶντα εἰς τὴν Νέαν Μονὴν τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης, *Makedonika* 4 (1955–60), 343–51. For the name of this church as a mosque, which is mentioned by some travelers, see *ibid.*, 345–46; it is worth consulting V. Dimitriades, Τοπογραφία Θεσσαλονίκης κατὰ τὴν ἐποχὴ τῆς Τουρκοκρατίας, 1430–1912 (Thessaloniki, 1983), 301–3. Dimitriades uses Turkish sources according to which the name of the mosque is Seray (Saray) Atik or Eski Seray.

³L. Syndika Laourda, Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὸν ἀρχιεπίσκοπον Θεσσαλονίκης Γαβριήλ, *Makedonika* 4 (1955–60), 360: τὸν κάλλιστον τῆς πόλεως τόπον ἀπολεξάμενος, ἰναδήποτε καὶ βασιλεῖα ἱδρυτο, τοῖς φοιτηταῖς διακαθαίρειν ἐδίδου καὶ πρὸς οἰκονομίαν εὐτρεπίζειν μοναστηρίου.

⁴G. Theocharides, Ἡ Νέα Μονὴ Θεσσαλονίκης, *Makedonika* 3 (1953–55), 339–52.

⁵V. Laurent, “Le métropolitain de Thessalonique Gabriel (1397–1416/19) et le couvent de la NEA MONI,” *Hellenika* 13 (1954), 252–54, and *idem*, “Une nouvelle fondation de Choumnos: La Nea Moni de Thessalonique,” *REB* 13 (1955), 116.

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¹Ch. Texier and R. Popplewell Pullan, *Byzantine Architecture* (London, 1864), 122.

questioned. Thus the conclusion that the church of "Profitis Elias" is the katholikon of Nea Moni is now accepted as fact in numerous publications.⁶ In this paper, I propose to reexamine the evidence and to suggest a different identification for this important and perplexing monument.

Several important factors militate against the identification of "Profitis Elias" as the Nea Moni of Makarios Choumnos. One of the important indications is found in a historical text, the founder's *hypotypōsis*, from which we learn that the monastery was to have fifteen monks.⁷ As is commonly known, the founders of monasteries had certain rights, one of which was to specify the number of monks, which was meant to remain unchanged in perpetuity.⁸ This evidence suggests that Nea Moni would have required a considerably smaller katholikon, more on the scale of H. Nikolaos Orphanos or the church of the Vlatadon monastery, rather than the much grander "Profitis Elias."⁹ It appears unlikely that a church on the scale of "Profitis Elias" would have been constructed to serve such a small community: in fact, it is larger than any late Byzantine katholikon on Mount Athos or in Constantinople.

But was the church in question actually a monastic katholikon? The answer is undoubtedly positive, considering the plan of the building (Fig. 4).

⁶See C. Mango, *Byzantine Architecture* (New York, 1976), 277, and P. Vocotopoulos, "Church Architecture in Thessaloniki in the 14th Century: Remarks on the Typology," in *L'art de Thessalonique et des pays balkaniques et les courants spirituels au XIVe siècle* (Belgrade, 1987), 111.

⁷V. Laurent, "Écrits spirituels inédits de Macaire Choumnos," *Hellenika* 14 (1955), 60–71.

⁸See the following typika: of Saint Athanasios, founder of the Lavra monastery, Ph. Meyer, *Die Haupturkunden für die Geschichte der Athosklöster* (Leipzig, 1894), 114 (providing for 80 persons); of Attaleiates, F. Miklosich and J. Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana* (= MM), V (Vienna, 1887), 311 (7 persons); of Prodomos the Phoberos, A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Noctes Petropolitanae* (St. Petersburg, 1913), 57 (12 persons); of Kecharitomene, MM, V, 337 (24–40 nuns); of Pantokrator in Constantinople, A. Dmitrievskij, *Opisanie liturgičeskich rukopisej*, I, Τυπικὰ (Kiev, 1895), 671 (80 persons); of Kosmosoteira, L. Petit, "Le Typikon du monastère de Kosmosoteira rès d'Ainos (1152)," *IRAIK* 13 (1908), 24 (74 persons); of H. Mamas, S. Eustratiades, Τυπικὸν τῆς ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει μονῆς τοῦ Ἁγίου Μεγαλομάρτυρος Μάμαντος, *Hellenika* 1 (1928), 267 (20 persons); of Theotokos τῶν Ἁγίου Βωμῶν, Dmitrievskij, 725 (20 persons); of Archistrategos Michael, Dmitrievskij, 780 (40 persons); and of Theotokos τῆς Βεβαίας Ἐπιόδου, R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire byzantin. Première partie. Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique* (Paris, 1969), 159 (24–50 nuns).

⁹For these small churches, see A. Xyngopoulos, Τέσσαρες μικροὶ ναοὶ τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης ἐπὶ τῶν χρόνων τῶν Παλαιολόγων (Thessaloniki, 1952), 29–44, 49–62; also *Thessaloniki and Its Monuments* (Thessaloniki, 1985), 108–10, 125–27, and Vocotopoulos, "Church Architecture," 114–15.

The cross-in-square plan of the naos is of the Athonite type, that is, extended into a triconch with lateral apses (choroi) that had a special function for the requirements of monastic worship. In addition, the naos is preceded by a *litē*, an enlarged narthex used in monastic services. Numerous katholika of similar plan are preserved on Mount Athos.¹⁰

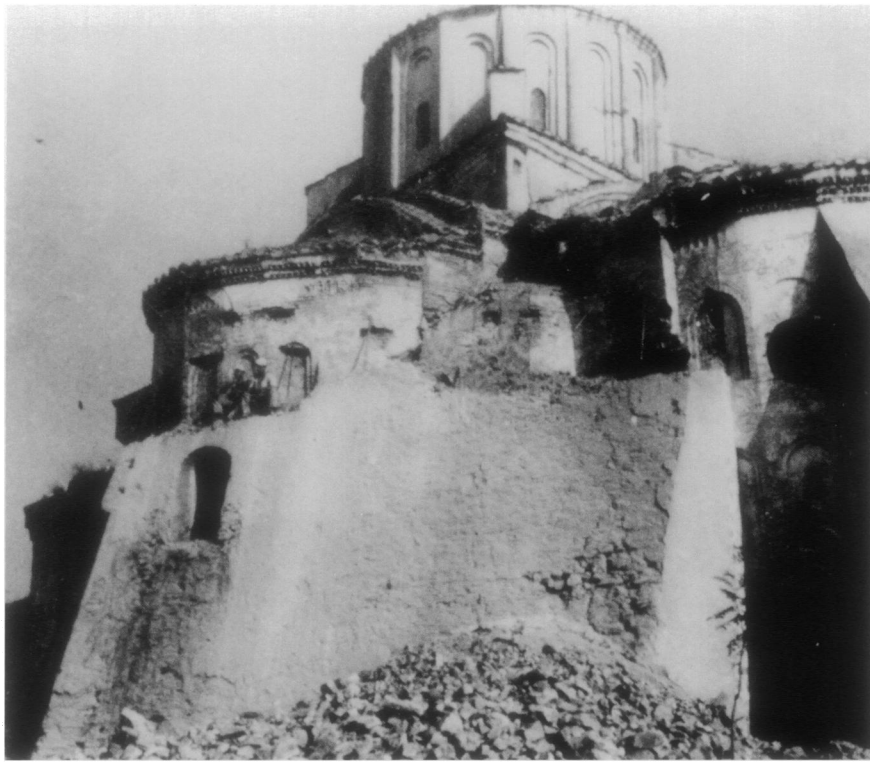
A second question may be raised: was the church of "Profitis Elias" originally dedicated to the Virgin, as we know the monastery of Nea Moni to have been? Again, the building itself provides the answer. Numerous elements of the fresco program of the *litē* still survive. These have never been thoroughly published, but a careful study of the fragmentary remains and their context is useful to our discussion. The central entrance from the *litē* to the naos is today topped by an arch. The jambs and lintel of the door were probably demolished during the long period when the building functioned as a mosque, and have not survived. Also missing is the filled tympanum, which would originally have existed between the lintel and the relieving arch above it, as well as its frescoed surface. It was common practice for the saint to whom a church was dedicated to be represented above the central entrance to the naos. Although in this case the central image is missing, the remains of fresco decoration in the adjacent surface help to reconstruct its subject. Preserved on the surface of the pilaster immediately to the north of the portal is a fragmentary image of the Virgin Paraklesis (Figs. 5–6). She bows her head respectfully and holds an open *eiletarion* (scroll) with a fragmentary inscription addressed to Christ: "Oh compassionate [Christ], accept the prayers of your mother" (Fig. 7).¹¹ On the segments of the groin vault immediately above the central entrance are two six-winged angels (*hexapteryga*), each holding two banners with the inscription "Hagios Hagios Hagios," accompa-

¹⁰The correct plan of the "Profitis Elias" was published for the first time in *Thessaloniki and Its Monuments*, 128. P. Mylonas, Παρατηρήσεις στὸ καθολικὸ Χελανδαρίου, in *Ἀρχαιολογία* 14 (Feb. 1985), 82 note 94, suggests that the *litē* of Profitis Elias is an addition of the 16th century, but this is certainly incorrect. The existing frescoes would not allow for such an extreme dating.

¹¹[Δέξαι] / δέξουν τῇ[ς] σῆς μητ[ρ]ῆς / Οἰκτιρμο[v] / EIC / IIF[. . .]. For this kind of text, which appears on the Virgin's *eiletarion*, see Dionysios of Fournas, Ἐμνηεῖα τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης, ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus (St. Petersburg, 1909), 280. See also S. Der Nersessian, "Two Images of the Virgin in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection," *DOP* 14 (1960), 83, where mention is made of the presentation of the Theotokos in the church of "Profitis Elias," but the inscription is not reproduced.



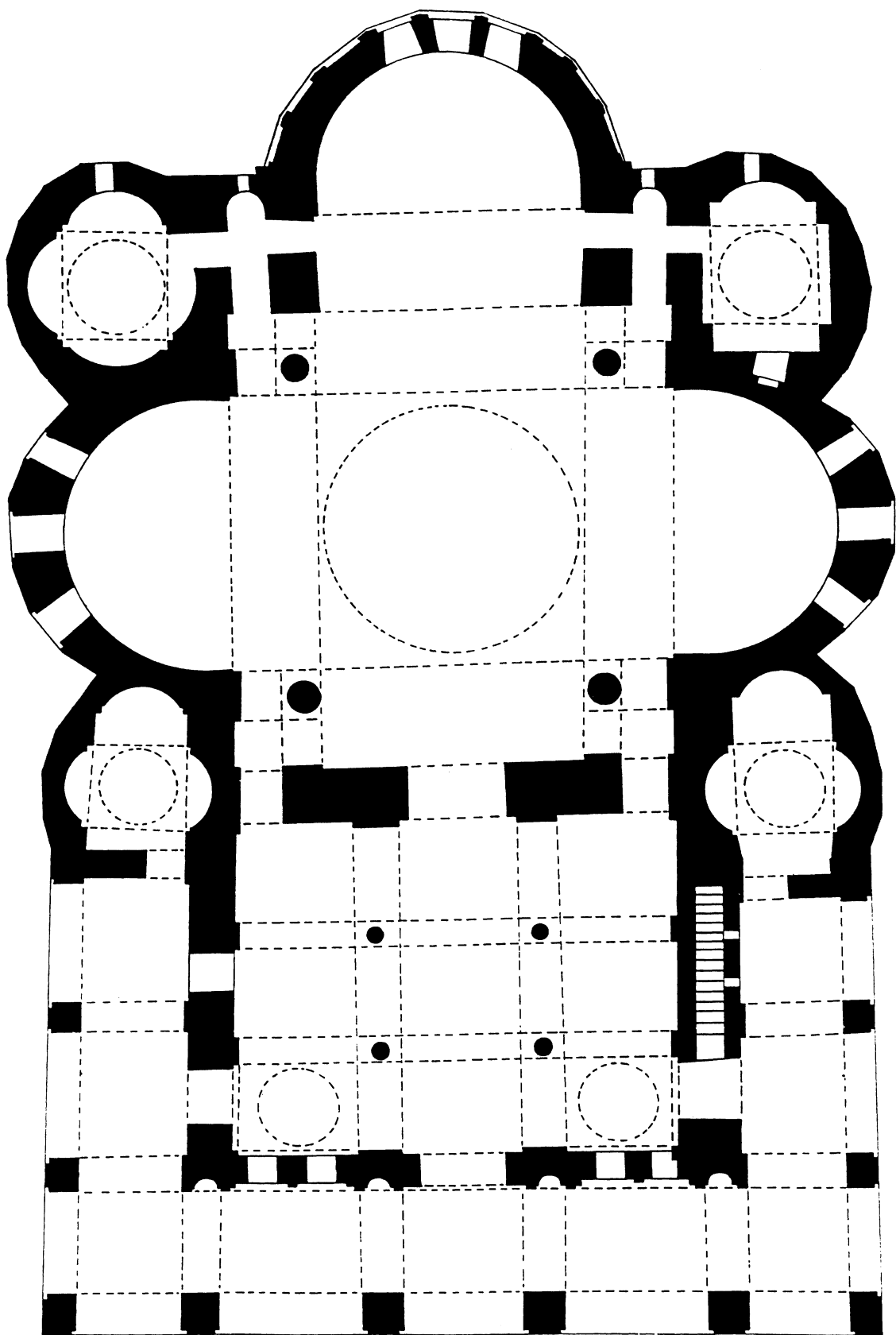
1 Thessaloniki, Profitis Elias. General view from southeast (photo: R. Ousterhout)



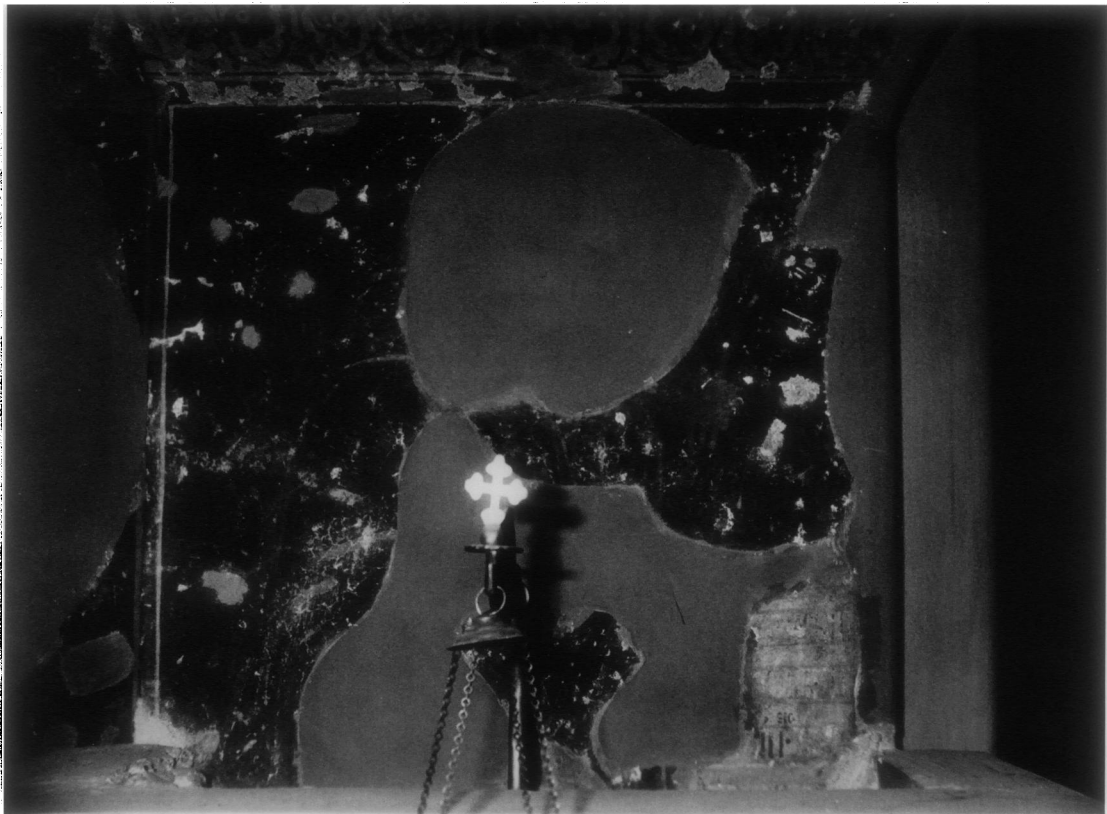
2 Same. View from southeast during restoration
(photo: Archive of the Ninth Ephoreia of Byzantine Antiquities)



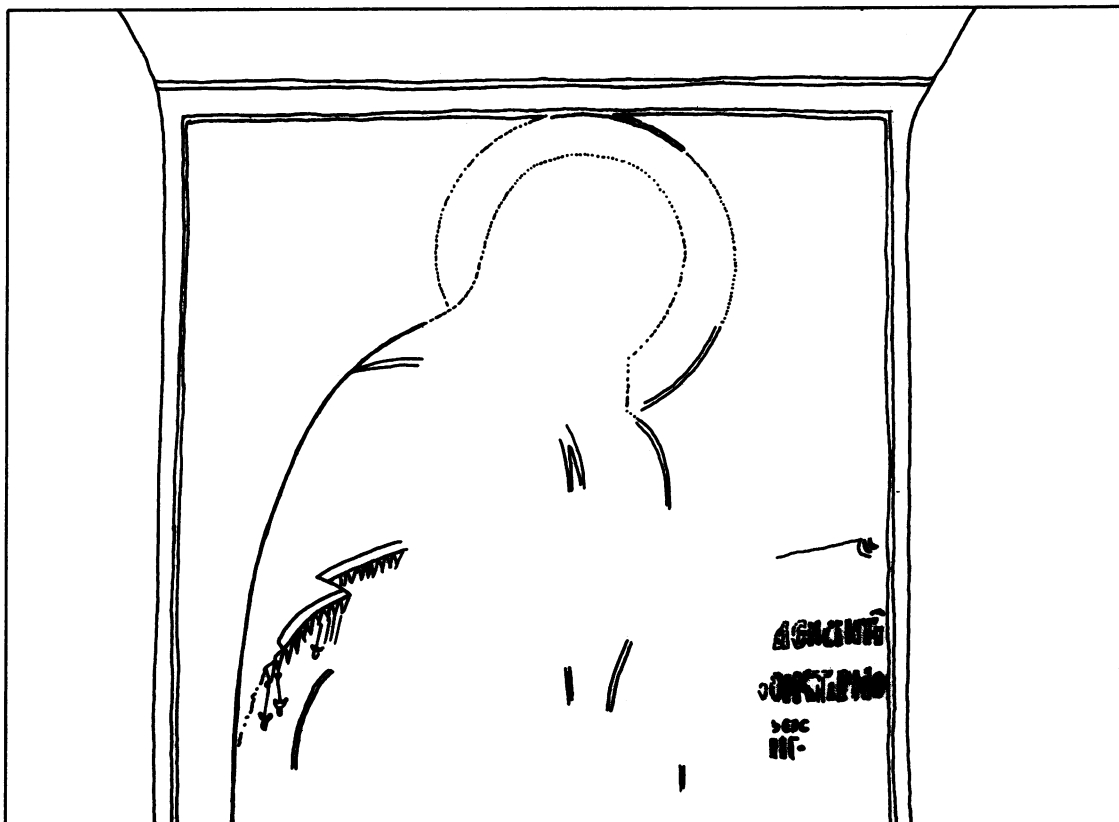
3 Same. General view from south (photo: R. Ousterhout)



4 Same. Plan



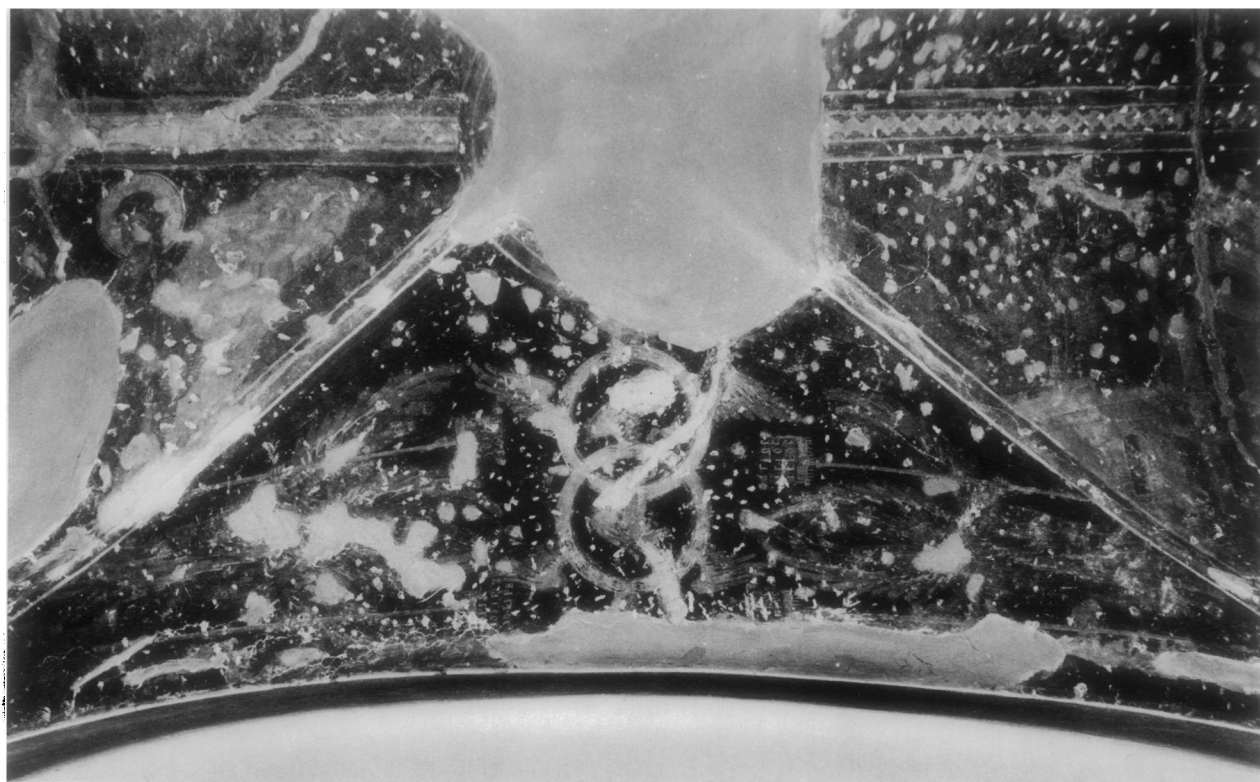
5 Same. Interior of *litz*, fresco of Virgin Paraklesis



6 Drawing to clarify Figure 5



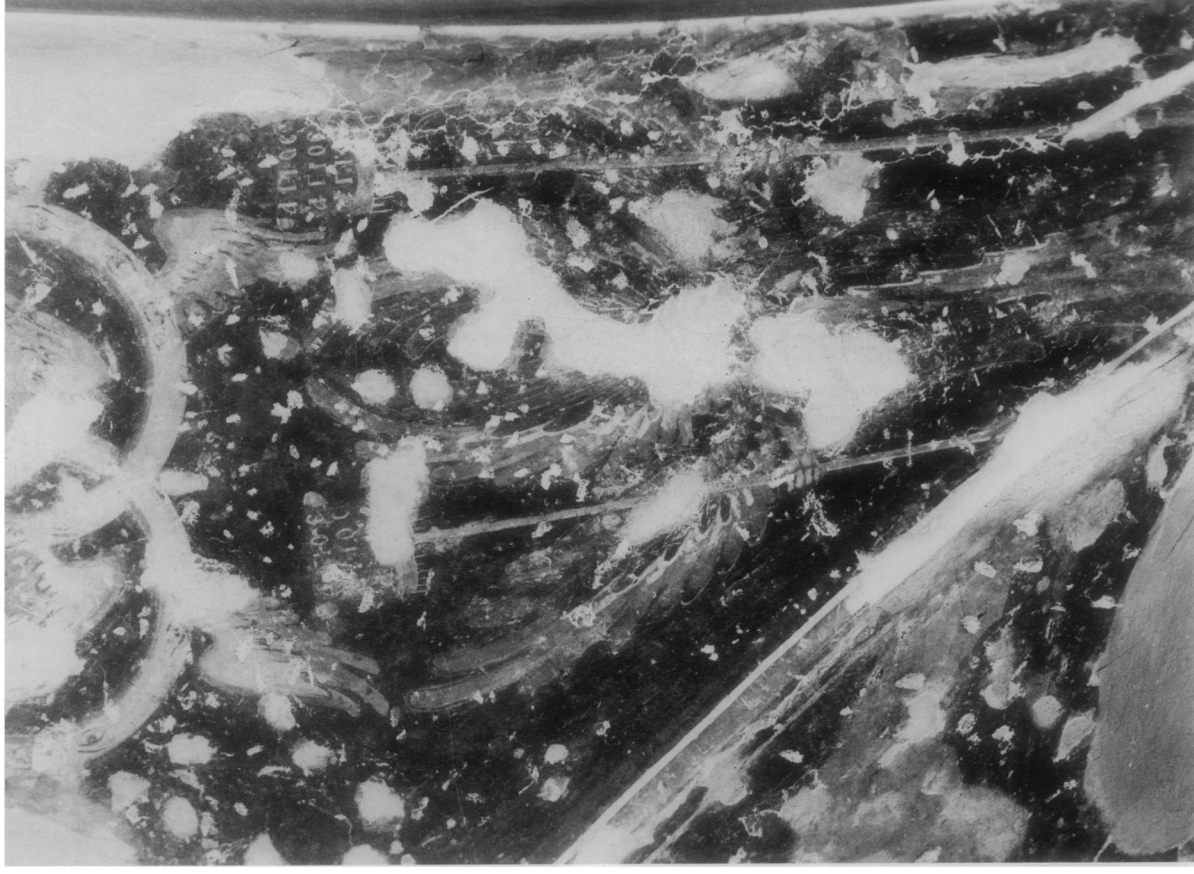
7 Detail of Figure 5, showing inscription on *eiletarion*



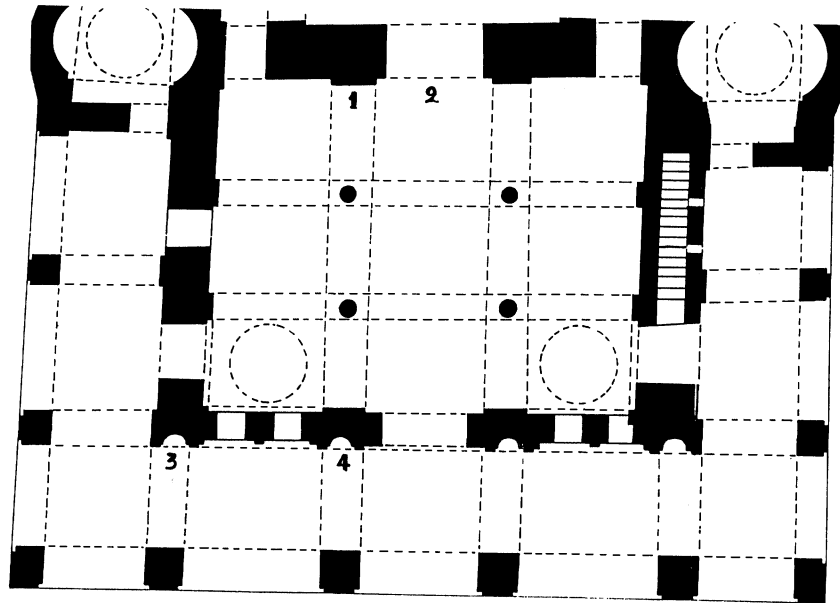
8 Same. Interior of *litz*, fresco of vault showing six-winged angels and *polyommata*



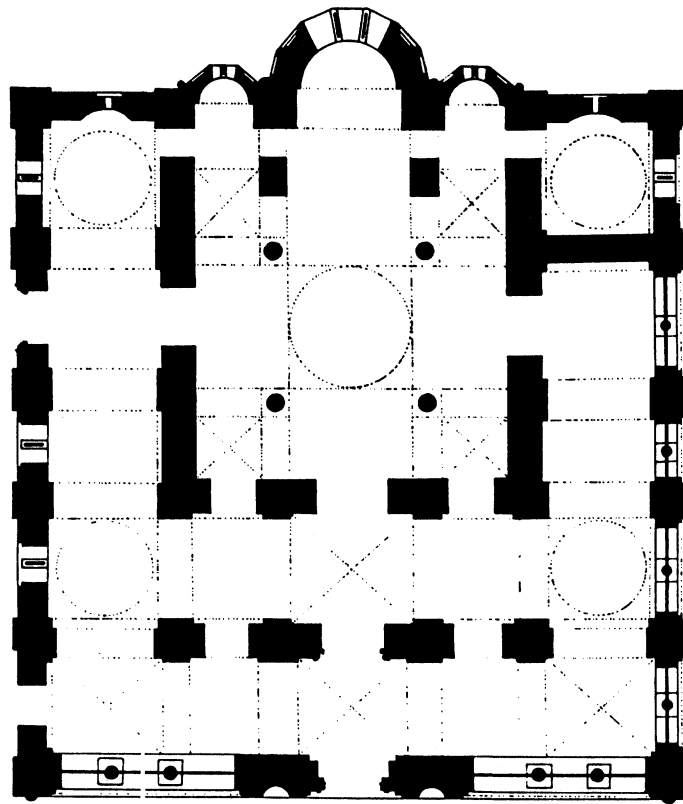
9 Detail of Figure 8



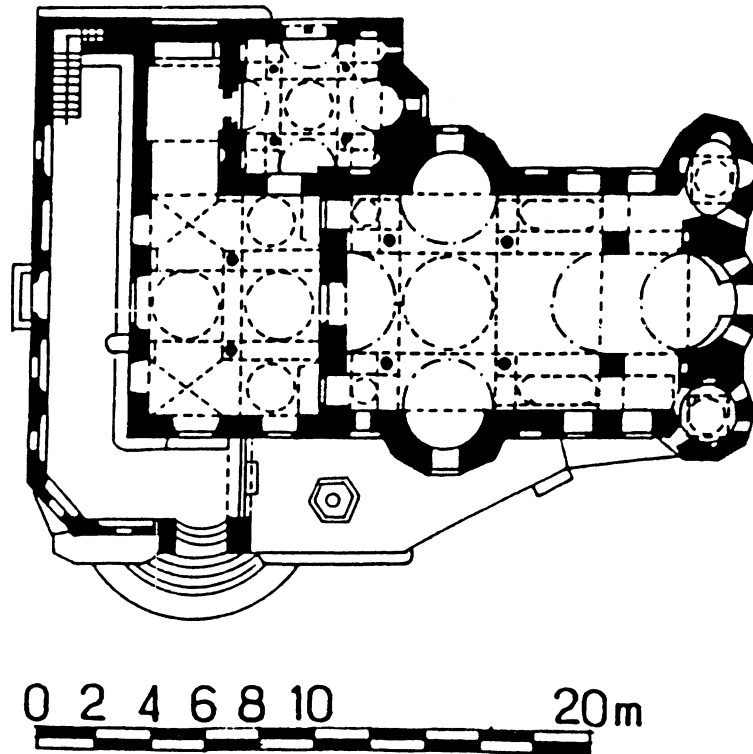
10 Detail of Figure 8



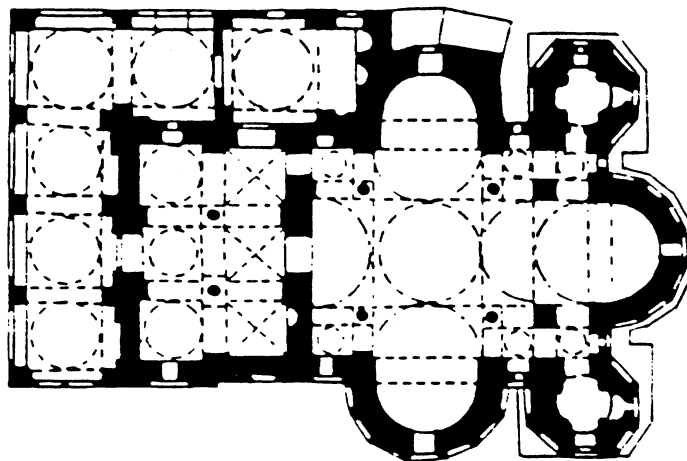
11 Same. Plan of *litē* showing position of frescoes: (1) Panagia Paraklesis; (2) Six-winged angels; (3) St. Anne; (4) Virgin and Child



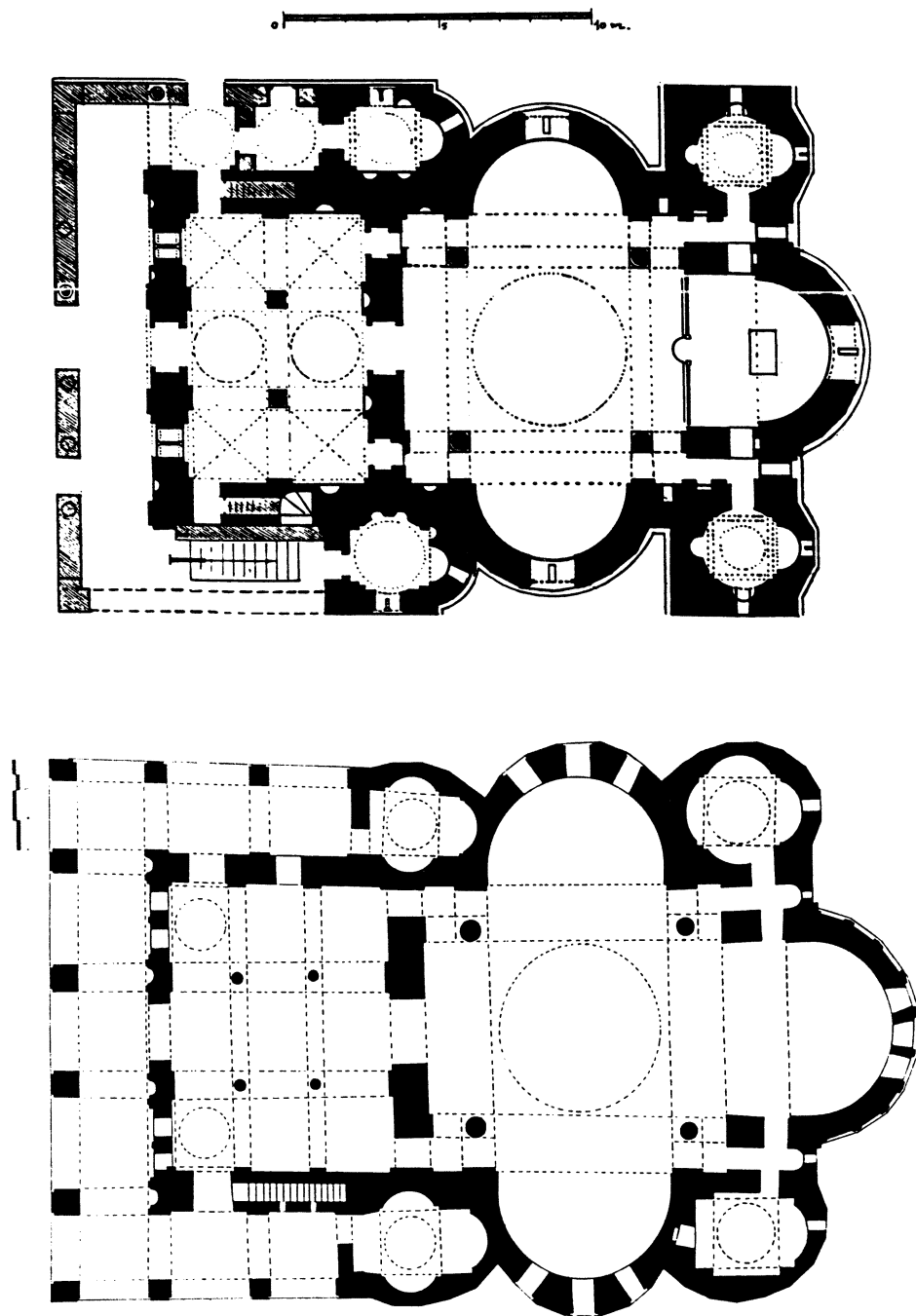
12 Thessaloniki. Holy Apostles, plan



13 Mount Athos. Pantokrator monastery, plan of katholikon
(after Mylonas)



14 Mount Athos. Kutlumiou monastery, plan of katholikon
(after Mylonas)



15 Tsaghesi (vicinity of). Komneneion monastery, plan of katholikon (after Soteriou), reproduced at the same scale as Profitis Elias

nied by two *polyommata* (Figs. 8–10). Because the Virgin is represented on the north pilaster, one can reasonably suggest that the pilaster south of the entrance contained an image of St. John Prodromos. Such a Deesis would have been meaningless without the image of Christ, which must have appeared on the tympanum over the entrance.¹² This hypothesis is also supported by the appearance of the six-winged angels and the liturgical inscriptions on their banners.

Additional significant iconographic information for the original dedication of the church is provided by the fragmentary frescoes on the four niches of the west facade of the *litē*. Two may be identified: St. Anne holding the infant Virgin, and the Virgin holding the Christ child (Fig. 11). The order of these representations is similar to those of identical subject matter in the exonarthex of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul, formerly the church of Christ in the Chora monastery.¹³ Similarly, this arrangement suggests an image of Christ above the main entrance to the church. And, like the narthexes of the Chora, the *litē* of "Profitis Elias" was decorated with scenes of the Infancy, Ministry, and Miracles of Christ; and although this program could have been unconnected with the dedication of the church, it certainly would not rule it out. Thus a number of iconographic elements seem to indicate that the church was originally dedicated to Christ. Consequently, its identification with the Nea Moni of Makarios Choumnos, dedicated to the Virgin, should now be discarded.

This misidentification has hindered the examination of the monument's many problems. In fact, the identification of "Profitis Elias" as the katholikon of a monastery dedicated to Christ poses some new and interesting questions. Before the capture

of Thessaloniki by the Turks in 1430, the city had two important monasteries dedicated to Christ: the Philokales and the Akapniou.¹⁴ Questions concerning the former have been widely discussed, but without satisfactory resolution.¹⁵ As for the Akapniou monastery, almost nothing has been said. The historical sources for both of these monasteries are few, and none refers to a restoration in the fourteenth century.¹⁶ The problem becomes more challenging when one attempts to identify other problematic churches of Thessaloniki. The church of the "Holy Apostles" has been identified as the monastery of the Theotokos Gorgoepekoos, and the church of "St. Panteleimon" as the Peribleptos of Kyr Isaak.¹⁷

Only two of Thessaloniki's churches now remain unidentified: "Profitis Elias" and "Hagia Aikaterini."¹⁸ Elements of the fresco decoration in both of these churches indicate that they were dedicated to Christ. The iconographic program of "Hagia Aikaterini" included the Miracles of Christ in a section of the naos below the destroyed Dodekaorton, indicating with some certainty a dedication to Christ.¹⁹ Based on its iconographic program, I have reached a similar conclusion for the church of "Profitis Elias." Thus two churches dedicated to Christ are preserved today, although their remaining dedications were lost with their conversion to mosques.²⁰ Is it possible to identify these two buildings with the katholika of the monasteries of Phi-

¹⁴For these two monasteries, see R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins* (Paris, 1975), 347–49, 418–19.

¹⁵See G. Theodorides, *Μία εξαφανισθείσα σημαντική μονή της Θεσσαλονίκης. Ἡ μονή Φιλοκάλλη*, *Makedonika* 21 (1981), 319–50, for the earlier bibliography on the history of this monastery. The author concludes that the location of this monastery must be sought in the region of the church of H. Nikolaos Orphanos.

¹⁶Compare the information on these monasteries in Janin, *op. cit.*

¹⁷See Janin, *Les églises*, 352–54, 386–88.

¹⁸The plan of this church can be found in *Thessaloniki and Its Monuments*, 116, and S. Ćurčić, *Gračanica* (University Park, Pa., 1979), fig. 107.

¹⁹The frescoes of "Hagia Aikaterini" are unpublished.

²⁰The katholikon of the Vlatades monastery has also been preserved (Transfiguration of Christ), though smaller in dimensions than the church of "Hagia Aikaterini" and "Profitis Elias." Nonetheless, there is no problem concerning the identification of this monastery: see Xyngopoulos (above, note 9) and G. Stogioglou, *Ἡ ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ πατριαρχική μονὴ τῶν Βλατάδων* (Thessaloniki, 1971), and Janin, *Les églises*, 356–57. Other churches in Thessaloniki dedicated to Christ were commonly properties (μετόχια) of Athonite monasteries; their importance for the town was limited. For these churches see Janin, 416–17. Archaeological evidence has identified the Palaeologan church previously known as the church of the Soter (Janin, 417) with an anonymous church of the Theotokos; see *Thessaloniki and Its Monuments*, 122.

¹²The example of the frescoes on the same wall of the *litē* in the katholikon of the Pantokrator monastery on Mount Athos is helpful despite some small iconographic differences: see E. Tsingaridas, *Τοιχογραφίες καὶ εἰκόνες τῆς μονῆς Παντοκράτορος Ἀγίου Ὁρους*, *Makedonika* 18 (1978), 187 and pl. 5. The same author believes that the original frescoes of the katholikon must be dated in the decade 1360–70. Another similar example of this iconographic form is to be found in the fresco decoration of the narthex of the Pantokrator monastery in Dečani: V. R. Petković and D. Bosković, *Manastir Dečani*, pt. II (Belgrade, 1941), 2–3 and pls. LXXIV, LXXV.

¹³P. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami*, I (New York, 1966), 160–62 and fig. 3. Some elements of St. John Prodromos are preserved on the southern pilaster by the main entrance, *ibid.*, 162. Underwood notes the connection between St. Anna, the Virgin, and John with the representation of Christ over the entrance of the exonarthex entering the esonarthex. This arrangement indicates that the representation of Christ might have been in the same place on the exterior facade of the *litē* of "Profitis Elias."

lokales and of Akapniou? And if so, which was which? There is no doubt that both of these monasteries flourished during the fourteenth century and were of considerable importance as late as Ignatios of Smolensk's visit to the city in 1405.²¹ In spite of the temptation to speculate, I will leave the historical problems of "Hagia Aikaterini" and concentrate on the identification of "Profitis Elias."

The Philokales monastery had a sort of sentimental attachment to the royal house of the Serbs.²² The Akapniou, on the other hand, seems to have been associated with the Palaeologan dynasty. The latter had a special significance for Thessaloniki because of a miracle that occurred in the church and that predicted the ascent of the Palaiologoi to the imperial throne of Constantinople. In 1258 a "divine utterance," the incomprehensible word ΜΑΡΠΟΥ, was heard in the sanctuary of the Akapniou. This was interpreted by Manuel Disypatos, metropolitan of Thessaloniki, as M[ichael] A[nax] R[omaion] P[alaiologos] O[xeōs] Y[mnēthēsetai].²³ Disypatos' interpretation was proven correct by the well-known historical events that followed. In 1261 Michael VIII Palaiologos entered Constantinople and established the new dynasty of the Palaiologoi. An echo of this curious prophecy is found in the decoration of the Serbian church of Arilje, where the curious word ΜΑΡΠΟΥ is written on the north wall of the naos.²⁴

As a consequence of the prophecy, Michael VIII and the new imperial house of Constantinople had a kind of sentimental connection with the Akapniou monastery. Unfortunately, during the reigns of Michael VIII and his successors, Andronikos II and Andronikos III, there is no documentary evidence that the monastery benefited from this imperial association. Nevertheless, already at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the monastery is referred to as the "revered, great, imperial, and patriarchal monastery of Akapniou."²⁵ Such des-

ignations were unknown in references to the monastery before the Palaeologan era.²⁶

The first secure, direct connection between the Akapniou monastery and members of the imperial house occurred during the period when Basilissa Anna Palaiologina, wife of Andronikos III, resided in Thessaloniki. She governed the city alone or with her son, Emperor John V, between 1351 and 1365/6.²⁷ On her orders, the archimandrite of the Akapniou, Euthymios, and the hegoumenos of the Prodomos monastery acted as judges in a case at the Docheiariou monastery.²⁸ Curiously, Euthymios signed the resulting document first, superseding the other legal authorities of Thessaloniki, such as the governor or metropolitan.

The unique position of the Akapniou within the city of Thessaloniki is also seen in the struggle between it and the metropolis of Thessaloniki. The Akapniou claimed the right to name the clergy and the *oikonomos* of the church of the Asomatoi, which was under the control of the metropolis. These facts suggest not only the self-rule and independence of the Akapniou, but also a position of privilege that only imperial favor could have justified.²⁹ In addition, the same monastery played

²⁶ See Janin, *Les églises*, 347.

²⁷ For the residence of Anna Palaiologina in Thessaloniki, see D. Nicol and S. Bendall, "Anna of Savoy in Thessalonica: The Numismatic Evidence," *RN* 19 (1977), 87–108. She died in Thessaloniki as the nun Anastasia.

²⁸ This document was written before May 1361: N. Oikonomides, *Actes de Docheiariou* (Paris, 1984), 207, no. 34, lines 11–12: ὥρισεν ἡ κραταιὰ καὶ ἁγία ἡμῶν κυρία καὶ δέσποινα πρὸς ἡμᾶς καὶ παρεγενόμεθα εἰς τὸ θεοφροῦρητον παλάτιον ἵνα ἀκούσωμεν τὴν τοιαύτην ὑπόθεσιν, ὡς μοναχικὴν, καὶ εἰπωμεν ὅσον ἡμῖν φανῇ δίκαιον. The signature of Euthymios is on lines 31–32 of the same document. Another document of Docheiariou, *ibid.*, 212, no. 35 (1361), lines 15–17, says: ἐφάνη δὲ τῇ βασιλεῖα μου καλὸν, ἵνα λαληθῇ ἡ τοιαύτη ὑπόθεσις παρόντων ἐκείσε τῶν τιμωτῶν ἡγουμένων τῶν σεβασμίων μονῶν τῆς βασιλείας ἡμῶν τοῦ τε Ἀκαπνίου, τοῦ Χορταΐτου, τοῦ Προδρόμου. . . .

²⁹ For the controversy between Akapniou and the metropolis of Thessaloniki, see Janin, *Les églises*, 348. The patriarchal document of June 1339 concerning this controversy has been edited in *MM*, I (Vienna, 1860), no. 89, 191–94. According to this text, the monastery of Akapniou, despite the objections of the metropolitan of Thessaloniki, had been granted chrysobulls and a *πρόσταγμα* τοῦ αὐιδίου καὶ μακαρίου βασιλέως (Andronikos II), as well as a *πρόσταγμα* of Emperor Andronikos III, all of which allowed the monastery to elect the clergy and the *oikonomos* of the church of the Asomatoi (for this church see G. Theodorides, 'Ο ναὸς τῶν Ἀσωμάτων καὶ ἡ Rotonda τοῦ Ἁγίου Γεωργίου Θεσσαλονίκης, *Hellenika* 13 [1954], 24–70). Unfortunately the chrysobulls and the *prostagma* of Andronikos II, dated to shortly before 1328 by Fr. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches*, 4. Teil, *Regesten von 1328–1341* (Munich-Berlin, 1960), 115. nos. 2590–91, as well as the *prostagma* of Andronikos III, dated to shortly before

²¹ Mme. de Kitrovo, *Itinéraires russes en Orient* (Geneva, 1889), 147.

²² A. Cituridu, "Manastir Filokal u Solunu," in *Sava Njemanić-sveti Sava: Istorija ipredanje* (Belgrade, 1979), 263.

²³ G. Pachymeres, *De Michaele et Andronico Palaeologis*, Bonn ed., I, 27–28.

²⁴ See V. Djurić, *Byzantinische Fresken in Jugoslawien* (Munich, 1976), 61 and note 46, for useful bibliography on Arilje (1296).

²⁵ See D. Papachryssanthou, *Actes de Xénophon* (Paris, 1986), 165, no. 20 (1324), line 24: σεβασμία, μεγάλη, βασιλική καὶ πατριαρχική μονή τοῦ Ἀκαπνίου. . . ; and L. Petit and B. Korabiev, *Actes de Chilandar* (St. Petersburg, 1911), 83, no. 36 (1318), line 10: . . . καὶ διαιροῦντος τὰ δίκαια τῆς σεβασμίας, βασιλικῆς μονῆς τοῦ Ἀκαπνίου. . . .

an important role in the ceremonies of Thessaloniki during Holy Week, especially on Good Friday. The Akapniou possessed a piece of the True Cross, which the monks displayed only for these liturgical ceremonies, as reported by Symeon (d. 1429), the last metropolitan of Thessaloniki before the capture of the city by the Turks in 1430.³⁰

The above discussion has focused on the history of the Akapniou and its importance in the later Byzantine history of Thessaloniki. But is it possible to associate this monastery with the present church of "Profitis Elias?" The archaeological evidence from the area of the church is scant. A relief icon of the Virgin, dated to the beginning of the eleventh century, was found near the church, and testifies to the antiquity of the religious site.³¹ In addition, an inscription of Petros Doukopoulos, dated to the year 1284, was discovered in the same area.³² It is known that the Akapniou was founded by St. Photios, the godfather of Basil II,³³ and thus

the antiquity of the monastery would accord with the date assigned to the relief of the Virgin. The inscription of Petros Doukopoulos is quite obscure, and thus it is difficult to recognize to which church rebuilding it refers. In any case, it is unclear whether either archaeological find was connected with the church now known as "Profitis Elias."

Of course, the present church could not date from the eleventh century, nor is the end of the thirteenth century a likely date. Among the elements of the plan that indicate a date well into the fourteenth century are the two domed chambers that flank the pastophoria, through which pass the only entrances. Because of their form, position, and isolation, these chambers should be identified as *typikareia*, according to the Athonite tradition. Such chambers were used to store the official documents of a monastery. Their liturgical necessity may have already figured in the design of the church of the "Holy Apostles" in Thessaloniki (Fig. 12).³⁴ In the plan of the Pantokrator monastery on Mount Athos, the *typikareia* had developed a kind of independent form (Fig. 13).³⁵ This is fully developed in the katholikon of the Kutlumusiou monastery of "Kyr Chariton," also on Mount Athos (Fig. 14). It is likely that the church of "Profitis Elias" had a position in this new typological development of the monastic katholikon. Another example more closely related to the plan and form of "Profitis Elias" is the ruined church of the Kom-

1339, Dölger, 162, no. 2836, have not survived. Their mention in the patriarchal document is the only indication of imperial interest in the Akapniou monastery.

³⁰Εν δὲ τῇ Ἀχειροποιήτῳ . . . ὁ κληρικὸς τὰς ὥρας . . . ψάλλει καὶ τὸν ἑσπερινὸν, οὗ ἐν τῷ τέλει μετὰ τὸ ἅγιον εὐαγγέλιον καὶ τὴν προσκύνῃσιν ποιεῖται τοῦ τιμίου ξύλου, ἀπὸ τῆς μονῆς τοῦ Ἀκαπνίου φερομένου καὶ τῆς ἁγίας εἰκόνης τῆς Ἀποκαθηλώσεως. See Th. Papazotos, Ὁ Μεγάλος ναὸς τῆς Θεοτόκου στὴ Θεσσαλονίκη. Μία ἐξέταση τῶν πηγῶν γιὰ τὴν ἱστορία τῆς Ἀχειροποιήτου, *Makedonika* 22 (1982), 130.

³¹The relief icon is displayed today in the White Tower of Thessaloniki; see Θεσσαλονίκη: Ἱστορία καὶ Τέχνη (Athens, 1986), 67–69.

³²The inscription has been published by E. Tsigaridas and K. Loverdou, Κατάλογος χριστιανικῶν ἐπιγραφῶν στὰ Μουσεῖα τῆς Θεσσαλονίκης (Thessaloniki, 1979), no. 70, with earlier bibliography; for its correct reading, see Th. Papazotos, Χριστιανικὲς ἐπιγραφὲς Μακεδονίας, *Makedonika* 21 (1981), 403–4: ἀνανεουργεῖ τὸν ναὸν σου τρισμάκαρ, / Πέτρος σεβαστὸς Δουκόπουλος ἐκ γένους· / καὶ γὰρ τελῶν φρούραρχος, ἐντὸς προσμένων, / σὲ δεξιούται συμφύλακα τῇ πόλει. / ἔχει γὰρ ἐντὸς τὸν μέγαν μυροβλήτην. For Petros Doukopoulos see *PLP* 3 (1978), 69, no. 5707.

³³Janin, *Les églises*, 347. According to the Life of St. Photios of Thessaly, ed. Bishop Arsenij, *Pochvalnoje slovo sv. Photiju Thessalijskomu* (Novgorod, 1897), Photios was a monk in Thessaloniki ἐν τινὶ βραχυτάτῳ σεμνεῖ . . . , ἅνω που περὶ τὴν ἀκρόπολιν ὄντι, καὶ ἱκανῶς τῆς τῶν πολιτῶν ἐπιμύξιας κεχωρισμένῳ, ἐπ' ὀνόματι τῶν ἁγίων Ἀναργύρων ἱατρῶν Κοσμά καὶ Δαμιανοῦ δεδομημένῳ, ἐντετυχηκῶς τε Βλασίῳ τῷ ἀσκητῇ, ἀνδρὶ μεγάλῳ τὴν ἀρετὴν. . . . Emperor Romanos Lekapenos learned of the saintliness of Vlasios to whom he entrusted the baptism of his son Basil in 958 (for this date see V. Grumel, "Le fondateur et la date de fondation du monastère thessalonicien d' Akapniou," *EO* 30 [1931], 94). Photios was also present at the baptism ceremony and held the child during the ceremony. For this reason he was considered the godfather of the child who was to become Emperor Basil II. Much later, when Basil campaigned against the Bulgarians, he found his old godfather in Thessaloniki and asked him to follow him in his campaign. After the end of the

war Photios returned to Thessaloniki with chrysobulls from Basil II, ἐν ᾗ δέλω καὶ βασιλεῖα δωρήματα περιέχεται. Photios began building projects in Thessaloniki: Βούλει τοὺς ὑπ' ἐκείνου περιποιηθέντας τῷ Κυρίῳ θεάσασθαι, ἄρον κύκλῳ τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς σου περὶ τήνδε τὴν ἀκρόπολιν, . . . καὶ ἴδε τὰ κατ' αὐτὴν συνεστώτα σεμνεῖα. Arsenij, op. cit., 13–29. The Life does not explicitly mention that Photios was the founder of the monastery of Akapniou. Grumel, op. cit., 92–93, however, basing his argument on a later poem of Demetrios Veaskos, grand oikonomos of the metropolis of Thessaloniki, dedicated to the memory of ὁσίου πατρὸς ἡμῶν Φωτίου καὶ κτήτορος μονῆς τοῦ Ἀκαπνίου ἐν Θεσσαλονίκῃ, has identified Photios, godfather of Basil II, with the Photios, founder of the Akapniou. From the description in the Life, Grumel assumes that the monastery of Akapniou was "dans la partie haute de la ville." This, though appearing to be corroborative evidence for the identification of "Profitis Elias" with the site of the monastery of Akapniou, since its position was high in the town, proves nothing.

³⁴After the first foundation of this church by Patriarch Niphon in 1310/14, his pupil and new founder, hegoumenos Paul, made some alterations to the inner part of the church: the original southern parekklesion led off from the southern ambulatory, creating an independent space, which was accessible only from the bema; one may thus interpret this new liturgical space as a forerunner of the *typikareia*.

³⁵Tsigaridas, Τοιχογραφίες, 185 (plan of the church).

neneion monastery near Tsaghesi in Thessaly (Fig. 15).³⁶

However, study of the Pantokrator, Kutlumu-siou, and the Komneneion monasteries is incomplete, and one is hesitant to base an argument on these examples. The Komneneion monastery is today almost completely destroyed. It is as yet unclear whether the constructions of the *typikareia* at the Pantokrator are contemporaneous with the foundation of the katholikon, that is, a little before 1363. The katholikon of Kutlumusiou was once considered a post-Byzantine church and dated 1540, but this has proven incorrect according to the recent examination of the fabric of the apse.³⁷ In spite of new research, the date of the building is still uncertain. Perhaps it is a foundation of Chariton, who was hegoumenos of the monastery before 1362, and later metropolitan of Ungrovlachia (1372) and protos of Mount Athos (1376–80).³⁸ This would help explain the monastery's common designation of "Kyr Chariton." Moreover, there is the same problem with the *typikareia* of Kutlumusiou as with those at the Pantokrator: we simply do not know if these are contemporary with the naos.

Because of the problematic nature of these comparisons, the most secure evidence for the dating of "Profitis Elias" remains its fresco decoration. It was common for a new foundation to have its mural decoration completed at the time of construction, and the frescoes of "Profitis Elias" must be regarded as a work of the later fourteenth century. V. Djurić has supported a more exact dating, in the decades 1360–80, but his opinion was based on the identification of the building with the Nea Moni of Makarios Choumnos, following Theodorides' proposal.³⁹ Unfortunately, until the frescoes can be properly cleaned and studied, it will be difficult to pinpoint the dating of these frescoes more precisely. For the time being, one can say that "Profitis Elias" was a katholikon dedicated to Christ, from the second half of the fourteenth century.

Although these elements do not further the possible connection of the church with the Akapniou,

another architectural peculiarity of the building may provide some insight. Within the south wall of the *litē* is a staircase that leads to a gallery or *katēchoumenon*, positioned above the eastern bays of the *litē*. The gallery consists of a long, narrow space with a tribelon that opens into the upper part of the west wall of the naos, offering a view toward the bema. The gallery is rather curiously adapted to the architectural design of the building, and thus it would seem to have been a special and desired feature. The function of such galleries is frequently connected with imperial ceremonies, as we learn from the Byzantine sources for some of the churches of Constantinople.⁴⁰ Besides the churches of H. Sophia and HH. Sergios and Bakchos in the capital, *katēchoumena* are also found at the Pantokrator and the Pantepoptes.⁴¹ The Kalendarhane also had a gallery, as reconstructed by Ebersolt and Thiers.⁴² In Arta, the Parigoritissa also has *katēchoumena*,⁴³ as did the Hodegitria in Mistra.⁴⁴ Similar features are found in H. Sophia in Thessaloniki,⁴⁵ the katholikon of Vatopedi on Mount Athos,⁴⁶ St. Sophia at Ohrid,⁴⁷ the Chrysokephalos in Trebizond,⁴⁸ and elsewhere. Most of these buildings are either imperial foundations or

⁴⁰ For information about *katēchoumena*, see under *κατηχομένα* in Du Cange, *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae Graecitatis*, I (Vratislaviae, 1891); see also Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De administrando imperio*, ed. G. Moravcsik, trans. R. J. H. Jenkins (Washington, D.C., 1967), 138: *καὶ ἐπάνω τοῦ ναοῦ αὐτοῦ πάλιν ἕτερος, δίκην κατηχομένων, . . . εἰς ὃν ἀνέρχονται διὰ κολλίου*. . . . For the coronation ceremony, see J. Verpeaux, *Pseudo-Kodinos, Traité des offices* (Paris, 1966), 268–69: *καὶ τελεσεθείσης τῆς ἱερᾶς λειτουργίας . . . καὶ εὐλογηθεὶς παρὰ τοῦ πατριάρχου καὶ τῶν παρόντων ἀρχιερέων καὶ κατασπασάμενος τὰς αὐτῶν χεῖρας, ἀνέρχεται εἰς τὰ λεγόμενα κατηχομένα. Αἰρομένων οὖν εὐθὺς τῶν βηλοθύρων εὐφημοῦνται οἱ βασιλεῖς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν τοῖς κατηχομένοις ὄντων ἀπάντων*. . . . For the use of the *katēchoumena*, see C. Delvoye, "Considérations sur l'emploi des tribunes dans l'église de la Vierge Hodigitria de Mistra," in *Actes du XIIe Congrès International des Études Byzantines*, III (Belgrade, 1964), 41–47.

⁴¹ T. Mathews, *The Byzantine Churches of Istanbul* (University Park, Pa., 1976), pls. on pp. 67, 83, 85, and 94.

⁴² J. Ebersolt and A. Thiers, *Les églises de Constantinople* (Paris, 1913), pls. xxii, xxvi.

⁴³ A. Orlandos, *Ἡ Παρηγορίτιστα τῆς Ἀρτῆς* (Athens, 1963), 49.

⁴⁴ Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, 290 and fig. 309.

⁴⁵ Ch. Diehl, M. Le Torneau, and H. Saladin, *Les monuments chrétiens de Salonique* (Paris, 1918), fig. on p. 128 and pl. xl.

⁴⁶ For photographic material of the *katēchoumena* in Vatopedi, see G. Millet, "Recherches au Mont Athos," *BCH* 29 (1905), pl. III and p. 91, and plan of the katholikon in P. Mylonas, "Le plan initial du katholikon de la Grand-Lavra au Mont Athos et la genèse du type du katholikon athonite," *CahArch* 32 (1984), 102.

⁴⁷ Sv. Grosdanov, *Ohridskoto sidno slikarstvo od XIV vek* (Ohrid, 1980), fig. on p. 61.

⁴⁸ N. Baklanov, "La Panagia Chrysocéphale de Trebizonde," *Byzantion* 4 (1927–28), 380–83.

³⁶ G. Soteriou, *Βυζαντινὰ μνημεῖα τῆς Θεσσαλίας II' καὶ ΙΔ' αἰῶνος*, 2. *Ἡ μονὴ τῆς Παναγίας καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Δημητρίου παρὰ τὸ Τσαγέσι*, *Ἑπ. Ἑτ. Βυζ. Σπ.* 5 (1928), 349–75.

³⁷ See *Ἀρχ. Δελτ.* 31 (1976), pt. B' 2—Χρονικά, 275, 283.

³⁸ For Chariton see P. Lemerle, *Actes de Kutlumu*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1988), 139–40.

³⁹ V. Djurić, "La peinture murale de Resava: Ses origines et sa place dans la peinture byzantine," in *L'école de la Morava et son temps* (Belgrade, 1972), 284.

intimately connected with members of the imperial family.⁴⁹ The existence of this singular architectural feature at "Profitis Elias" suggests that it may also have been an imperial foundation of the Palaeologan period. This interpretation would accord with the grandeur of the surviving edifice—and would also agree with the designation of the Akapniou as a "revered, great, imperial, and patriarchal monastery," as it is referred to in Palaeologan documents.

To conclude, I believe that the church of "Profitis Elias" should be viewed as an imperial building of the Palaeologan period. It was a monastic katholikon dedicated to Christ. In the fourteenth century there were two important monasteries dedicated to Christ in Thessaloniki: the Philokales and the Akapniou. The first was associated with the royal house of Serbia, and the second with the Palaiologoi. The architectural peculiarities of this katholikon dedicated to Christ would suggest a connection with the imperial family. Although the evidence is incomplete, it is tempting to identify "Profitis Elias" with the monastery of Akapniou. In any case, this identification is much more likely than Theodorides' proposal of Nea Moni. However, the founder of this splendid architectural creation remains unknown. One may suggest two

possible candidates: Anna Palaiologina, who governed Thessaloniki as an independent empress 1351–65/6, and Manuel II Palaiologos, who governed the city in 1369–73 and 1382–87.⁵⁰ Both of these figures were interested in Thessaloniki, since their names appear in inscriptions on the walls of the city.⁵¹ Of course, the battle at the Marica River in 1371 marked a new era, when the Turkish forces took control of much of Macedonia and Thrace, limiting the activities of the Christian population. It is hard to believe that such an impressive building could have been constructed in the decade following this battle, or indeed during the decade of the civil war (1341–50), when Thessaloniki was the object of contention between the two opposing parties.

A detailed examination of the building reveals that, in spite of its unified appearance, large scale, and wealth of exterior decoration, the church was constructed with an inferior building technique, mud having been used in the place of mortar. The building would have collapsed if the Turks had not supported it with strong buttresses. Thus the building itself is witness to the poverty of the times, although this poverty was veiled in a superficial splendor, as was the splendor of the Palaeologan dynasty during this period.

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⁴⁹ The appearance of *katēchoumena* in several churches may be explained by the fact that they were cathedrals, as H. Sophia in Thessaloniki or St. Sophia in Ohrid. It should be noted that in the foundations of the Serbian king Milutin, such as the church of Bogorodica Ljeviška in Prizren and the church of the Dormition of the Virgin in Gračanica (Ćurčić, *Gračanica* figs. 8, 18, 109, 110), there are also *katēchoumena*.

⁵⁰ J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus, 1391–1425* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1969), 9–59.

⁵¹ For these inscriptions see J. M. Spieser, "Les inscriptions de Thessalonique," *TM* 5 (1973), 175–77.